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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER

FLORENTINE FRAMES.

By A. CURTIS BOND.

THE Florentine frame is a mechanical revival of an art, which, if not lost, is at any rate not actively alive to-day.

In an era when a picture was an object of worship, its setting was made worthy of it. The highest art of the wood carver was employed to complete that of the painter. For the works of the great Italian masters of painting, the Italian masters of the chisel created frames appropriate to the subjects they enclosed. Even when religious art fell into its decline in the peninsular, the luxurious life to which it had succumbed demanded for the trivialities that succeeded it the same magnificence of embellishment. The result was that the Florentine frame survived the use for which it had been created, and held its own until the complete change in popular taste decreed the fashions in framing which we are now blessed with.

There has latterly, however, been a revival in popularity for the Florentine frame, or at least for a modern shadow of it. It costs so much nowadays to employ the wood carver as he was employed in the past, that a substitute for his patient skill has been found in machinery. The frames which were once made by hand, and were each individual works of art, are now turned out by steam and have lost their individuality. They have by no means lost this general merit however, and can be utilized in their modern form, quite as effectively, and much more cheaply, than when the city of the Medici was the center, and the well-spring of the art of the civilized world.

The size of a picture has almost as decided bearing on its framing as its character. For a huge allegory, or atlas piece in which the forms are massive, broad and simple, a bold and simple frame is appropriate. There is no better way to frame large pictures than in the massive, graceful, but not over elaborate Florentine carving. It gives a noble finish to noble work. But put the same form on a small and finicky picture, and the contrast between the minute painted detail, and the dignified and plain carved work around it becomes preposterous.

Yet on certain smaller works, the Florentine work, proportioned to suit the picture is extremely effective. For framing heads and portraits, when they are strong in execution and quiet in tone, the ingenuity of man has invented nothing finer than the Florentine mouldings, which can now be had from any frame maker.

Florentine frames for such uses should be bronze or gold, as the prevailing tone of the picture may require. This fact should always be borne in mind, that a Florentine frame in bronze should be placed around a bright or high keyed picture. Like to like

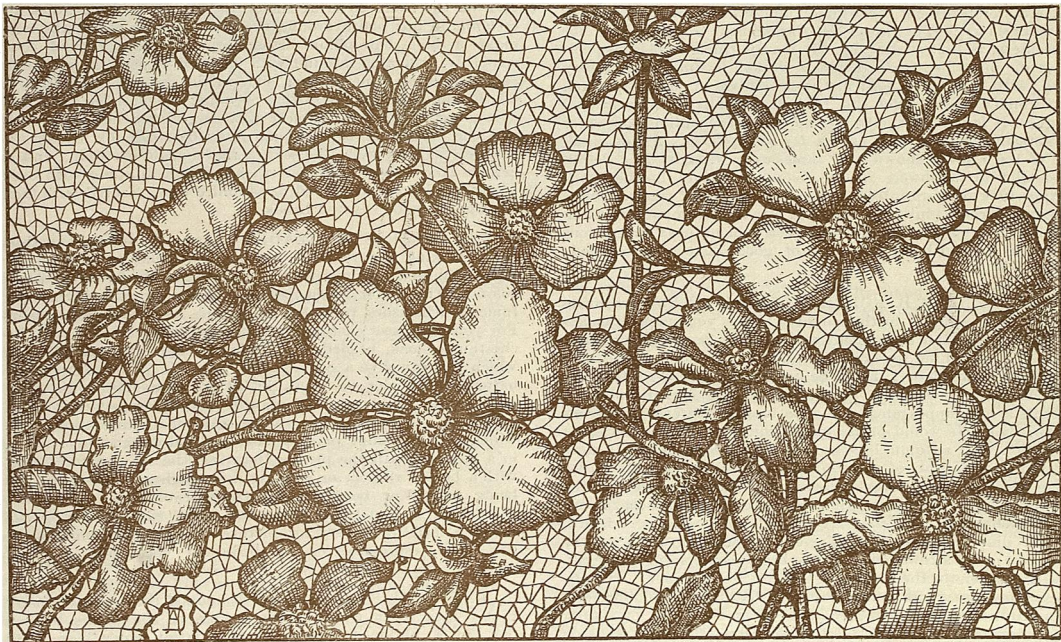
is the first principle to be observed in framing. A picture must harmonize in color with its frame as well as in form.

No greater fallacy of taste exists than that of putting a dark frame around a bright picture or *vice versa*. It does not set off the picture, it only invests it with a discordant finish which is worse than no finish at all. The brightness of the frame darkens a heavy picture still more, while a dark and heavy frame deprives a bright and delicate picture of strength, and enfeebls it while it subjugates and belittles its details.

Silver and green bronzes are to be avoided in framing pictures of any kind. They never, under any circumstances, harmonize with the work of the brush, and always form a discordant note upon a wall. The reason of this is to be found in the irredeemable gaudiness of silver, and in the cold and harsh tone of green bronze. These finishes are used simply to secure novelty and make a show, and deserve every condemnation good taste can impose by ignoring them.

MR. ALEXANDER E. OUTERBRIDGE, JR., successfully carbonizes lace or other fine fabrics by a process similar to that employed in preparing the carbon filaments used in incandescent electric lights. The lace is reduced to carbon or charcoal, but so gradually that it retains its structure intact, and is both flexible and incombustible. It was not known, and until he demonstrated the fact it would scarcely have been believed that such extremely delicate fabrics—charcoal of fine lace filaments—could pass through a bath of molten white-hot iron without injury. Yet such is the fact, and herein lies an important discovery, for Mr. Outerbridge having carbonized a piece of lace, or of dress pattern or embossed fabric, uses this delicate, ornamental pattern, for the face of a mould backed either by metal or green sand, and pouring into it steel or iron, gets a sharp casting of the pattern which may be used either as an ornamental casting or as a die for embossing leather, paper, or metallic surface. The same mould may be used for obtaining several castings, and no special care is required, either in preparing the carbonized material or in filling the mould with molten metal, to preserve the fabric from destruction. Fine lace (carbonized) suspended in the center of a mould has even been employed to divide a casting into two parts, presenting the pattern on each face. The process seems to open up a wide field of useful applications.

WHEN SCREWS are driven into soft wood and subjected to considerable strain, they are liable to work loose; in such case, dip the screw in thick glue before inserting. When buying screws, see that the heads are round and well cut; that there are no flaws in the body or thread part, and that they have gimlet points. A screw of good make will drive into oak as easy as others into pine, and will endure having twice the force brought against it.



A PANEL, BY HARRY A. DEANE.